Edward Hopper, *House by the Railroad*, 1925. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in.
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"Better for Haunts"

Victorian Houses and the Modern Imagination

Sarah Burns

In today's high-tech world of digital images and future shock, the moldering Victorian house still has a place. A search for images of "haunted houses" on the Internet yields an array of hits, but most striking is the fact that by far the greater number of the houses in this category are versions of the Victorian—with mansard roofs or multiple steep, craggy gables, along with assorted towers, Gothic gingerbread, ornate pillars, and cavernous verandas. So familiar are such houses that we respond to their visceral appeal without wondering why or how the Victorian house, in particular, came to be the universal signifier of mystery, creepiness, ghosts, and crime, or why a mansard roof, narrow lancet windows, or spiky iron lace in the moonlight stirs up vague anxiety and dread or elicits shivery thrills.

The Bates mansion in Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film *Psycho* (fig. 1) seems a likely source of such connotations, as does the ramshackle Victorian home of the cartoonist Charles Addams's eponymous horror-show family (see fig. 16). From decades earlier, there is Edward Hopper's *House by the Railroad* (frontispiece), which, with its enigmatic and forbidding Victorian face, could have been the model for both. Certainly, there are other sorts of places we associate with ghosts: old world castles, dungeons and crypts, the antebellum Big House, the alleged "witch" houses of seventeenth-century Salem. Yet none so pervades and dominates the haunted visual landscape as the Victorian house does today.

How did these connotations evolve, and why did they cling to Victorian styles more than any other? If we consider the Victorian house in its own time and place, it reads quite differently. There is nothing ominous about the mansard-roofed house in an 1871 stereo photograph (fig. 2). For the people posed here and there about the property, the house—then the height of fashion—was the material symbol of affluence, elegance, and taste. Half a century later, however, that very same style had become a signifier of terror, death, and decay. How, when, and why did the ghosts take over? The architecture did not change, but the context surrounding it did, and radically. By recovering that shifting context—aesthetic, historical, cultural, and social—we gain a clearer sense of the process by which the Victorian house became the prime *sinister locus* of the modern American imagination.

I aim to reconstruct that context, focusing on the interwar period (roughly 1918–40), when the haunted house evolved into its lasting form. In that process, visual culture played a fundamental role: in painting and photography,

1   Bates Mansion from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, 1960. Digital frame, Photofest, New York

2   John S. Moulton, *House at "Hillside," American Views*, 1871. Stereo photograph, 3½ x 7 in. Collection of Sarah Burns

illustrations and cartoons, on the screen and in magazines, artists shaped and gave eerie life to the domicile that has since haunted the modern imagination. The images they created—both the famous and the lesser known—suggest the makers' own often uneasy emotions about such places while also reifying more widespread attitudes. I trace the genealogy and ramifications of the iconic Victorian house by juxtaposing close looking at key images (and their producers) with a more panoramic view to find and situate this architectural type in the American psychic landscape, both individual and social.

Mongrel Architecture

Properly and historically speaking, the Victorian age encompasses much of the nineteenth century, in the United States bracketing the decades from the antebellum era (1840–61) through and beyond the Gay Nineties. For American artists, writers, and critics of the interwar decades, "Victorian" was also an all-purpose pejorative used to belittle nearly every nineteenth-century architectural style that deviated from the principles of colonial, federal, or Greek revival classicism. While the Gothic revival and other modes of antebellum eclecticism were accordingly devalued as a matter of course, the interwar moderns nourished a special antipathy to architectural styles of the Gilded Age, roughly from the mid-1860s through the waning years of the century. This period spawned the French Second Empire style (also known variously as the mansard or "General Grant"), the Queen Anne, and miscellaneous new permutations of the Romanesque and the Gothic—all of which had since fallen into deep disrepute.[1]

In the early twentieth century, all things Victorian—including houses—came under such a withering onslaught that if words alone could destroy, not a single structure would have been left standing. At the very height of that critical storm, however, and within a year of each other, Charles Burchfield (1893–1967) and Edward Hopper (1882–1967) enshrined such architecture in bold pictorial statements: *House of Mystery* (1924; fig. 3) and *House by the Railroad* (1925), respectively.

Burchfield's house is a craggy pile of jutting gables and narrow windows with dagger points that pierce its shabby facade, revealed in the glare of moonlight and etched with zigzag shadows. With its irregular profile and Gothic touches, the house is a Victorian jumble, part stick style, part Queen Anne. The claustrophobic space and the skewed perspective—what Jack Morgan has described as "wrong geometry"—trigger unease and anxiety

3   Charles Ephraim Burchfield, *House of Mystery*, 1924. Watercolor over graphite on paper, laid down on cardboard and varnished, 29 ½ x 24 ½ in. The Art Institute of Chicago, Watson F. Blair Purchase Prize and Olivia Shaler Swan Memorial Collection, 1941.501. Reproduced with permission of the Charles E. Burchfield Foundation. Photography © The Art Institute of Chicago

in the viewer. In the foreground, a crooked path leads through dingy snow to the shadowed portico. The front door is dark and barely visible, but two spindly porch columns frame a lancet window that glows an intense orange-red. On the left, the muddy brown profile of a neighboring house, with sharply thrusting eaves and Italianate brackets, squeezes shut any possible passage between the two structures. The only way to proceed is toward the shadowy portico and its red window, leading us to ask: What lies behind that door? What is the source of that light? The original title of the painting was *House of Death*, but the artist's dealer asked him to change it to something less morbid. Burchfield explained that his goal was to express a "deep mystery," conveying the idea that this was "a house where anything might have happened, or be happening."[2]

Contemporary critics registered anxious feelings in their responses to Burchfield's *House of Mystery* and his many other images of antiquated and abandoned dwellings. "No one," wrote James W. Lane, "has been able to paint a house looking more ghostly or murderous." Helen Appleton Read noted Burchfield's ability "to invest his decaying houses with a sense of pervading evil and corruption." The powerful anthropomorphism of this architecture only amplified such feelings. Elisabeth Luther Cary described *House of Mystery* as something that had "come alive" for the artist: "Its face is pallid. Its windows are eyes with eyebrows raised to a point, window frames twisted. . . . A fragment of ornament climbs like a lizard up the side wall. . . . A symbol of mystery with none of the machinery of symbolism."[3]

No less disquieting, Hopper's *House by the Railroad* represents a mansion in the General Grant style of the 1870s. It stands under a blank sky, the unseen sun casting harsh shadows that dim the front with its looming central tower, columned veranda, and second-story balustrade. Tier upon tier, ornate pediments decorate the coupled windows, the fanciest set into steep mansard roofs shingled in scaly slate. Most elaborate of all are the tall windows that stare down from the tower, their rounded pediments like thick eyebrows arched in hauteur. Behind the tower are three bulging chimneys, the red of their bricks furnishing the only note of vivid color. Shadows obscure the entranceway, veiling and erasing the door. The only possible movement seems to be out of the picture, one way or the other, on the rusty railroad tracks that extend across the picture plane, blocking access to the house on the other side. Yet the house emanates such a powerful presence that we can no more escape its draw than we can resist the pull toward Burchfield's ominous red window.

Hopper's reputation as an unflinching realist mediated critical reaction to *House by the Railroad*. Even so, many sensed its fraught mood. The critic Lloyd Goodrich, for example, wrote, "Without attempting to be anything more than a simple and direct portrait of an ugly house in an ugly place, it succeed[s] in being one of the most poignant and desolating pieces of realism that we have ever seen." Fellow painter Guy Pène du Bois—one of the few intimate confidantes of the famously taciturn Hopper—hinted at other meanings embedded in his friend's architectural portraits: "There is . . . a stillness which has its counterpart in the calm preceding a storm, an ominous lull, eery [sic], void, inhuman. These dead American houses—Victorian in architecture generally, ugly, whimsical exaggerations in tortured wood—are haunted. Whether Hopper produces this consciously or not, I cannot say."[4] Dead they might be, but Hopper's Victorian houses, and Burchfield's, too, did not rest in peace.

Commentary on the Victorian houses of Burchfield and Hopper was consistent with a broader pattern, which condemned all things of the later Victorian epoch as ugly, excessive, and un-American. Joy Wheeler Dow in 1904 branded the 1870s as a "Reign of Terror" during which nightmarish "cupola-houses" with hideous

Franco-American (i.e., mansard) roofs rampaged unchecked in the North, then awash with immense Civil War fortunes. New wealth was thought to have corroded the American spirit. Writing in the *Craftsman*, Alfred W. McCann in 1915 blasted the "newly rich" of that time who, becoming "patrons of the Mansard roof, the corner-clipped shingles, the grotesque arch, the crabbed angle, and the gilded flounce," incited a "riot of discord," of "barbarous bastardy . . . in which the only things real were ugliness and folly." By the 1920s, when the architectural critic Talbot Hamlin launched an all-out campaign against the Gilded Age, that pattern of denigration was firmly in place. Hamlin condemned the era as an "abyss of taste" that spawned "wooden monstrosities" and blighted the American scene with the "horribleness" of mansard roofs, the "bulging obesities" of the Victorian porch, chaotic confusion, restless incongruity, and "universal ugliness." To drive his point home, Hamlin reproduced illustrations from

Victorian builders' guides, such as the "wooden monstrosit[y]" in G. B. Croft's *Progressive American Architecture* (fig. 4), as an example of "ostentatious and arrogant ugliness."[5]

Writers on architecture and decoration, of course, had their own agendas, their own current styles to promote, and, by the early twentieth century, fashion both elite and vernacular had started to swing toward chaste variations on the colonial or the clean simplicity of the arts and crafts bungalow. However, many others also looked back on the Gilded Age as an era of unprecedented corruption, not limited to architecture but diffused throughout American society. The scholar-critic Lewis Mumford (two years Burchfield's junior) viewed the nineteenth century as one continuous process of aesthetic disintegration and decline, culminating after the Civil War in the barbarism of the "Brown Decades." Mumford's rubric denoted a "smudged and muddled" civilization that plumbed the lower depths to produce "atrocities" out of the "rubbish heaps" of the past, while "alien forces" overwhelmed the handful of artists and architects who struggled against the odds to preserve their integrity.[6] For Mumford, that ugliness was the visible manifestation of systemic disease and rot: "The nation not merely worked differently after the Civil War: the country *looked* different—darker, sadder, soberer. The Brown Decades had begun. Dead men were everywhere. They were present in memory: their portraits stoically gathered dust in empty parlors; they even retained possession of their bodies and walked about the streets." It was an age mired in a social swamp of venality, hollow excess, meaningless materialism, and spiritual torpor. Little wonder that a wilderness of architectural eyesores had risen from such

a morass of "dingy chocolate browns, sooty browns that merged into black."[7]

Mumford had mixed motives. While excoriating the past, he also aimed to extract and salvage whatever true gold lay hidden beneath that smutty surface. Mumford's purpose was not simply to express fear and loathing of the Gilded Age; his mission was to claim H. H. Richardson, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright as progenitors of American architectural modernism—clean, sleek, and pure, the very antithesis of the Victorian. He even acknowledged a "certain sentimental charm" in the houses of Burchfield and Hopper: "those mansard roofs, those tall, ill-proportioned windows, those dingy facades which conceal the dreadful contortions of walnut furniture." Yet Mumford's ferocity more generally betrays a deep disquiet about the numerous points of resemblance between two damaged postwar generations: the absence of youth, the triumph of cynicism and disillusion, infectious public vice and corruption, faith in a Machine Age that spewed forth contemptible imitations of real things, and a culture of sensation exacerbated by the abuses of tabloid newspapers.[8]

Like Mumford, the historian Frederic Paxson saw the 1870s and the 1920s in parallel. In both periods, "on every side there seemed to be waves of crime, flaunting immorality, disrespect for law, and discontent with the existing social order. Fears of a social revolution after the strikes of 1877 were matched by the forebodings of those who in the postwar years thought that the International Workers of the World (IWW), the communist revolutionists, and the proletarian agitators represented an oncoming collapse of all that America had hitherto valued." The turmoil caused by Prohibition and the revival of the Ku Klux Klan were to Paxson further signs of instability and decay.[9]

World War I cast the darkest shadow of all, assailing countless traumatized veterans and civilians with disillusion and despair. Returning from their military service abroad, the Princeton graduates John Peale Bishop and Edmund Wilson Jr. found that in America,

life itself had become a sort of death. . . . The city streets where we walked were as deep and as dark as graves; the great buildings seemed to us like tombs where the dead lay tier on tier. Wherever the characteristic activity of our time had passed, the earth appeared charred and sterile, littered with rubbish and bones . . . in a word, our environment and age have at last proved too strong for us, and, in a spirit which we honestly hope is one of loyal Americanism, we have decided that we shall best interpret our country in a book devoted to death.

Among the mordant poems and tales in that grim volume was "Death of an Efficiency Expert," which follows an unnamed technocrat to his job in a Newark candy factory. En route, the anonymous subject traverses a blighted urban landscape, where life has become "heavy and sordid and empty behind dusty windows." He feels "for the first time that Death was blackening and rotting the city."[10]

Even America's modern factories spewed forth rot. Deliberating whether machine culture represented progress, regression, or some unforeseen consequence, the economist Stuart Chase itemized a long list of inferior factory-made goods, including spoiled ketchup, adulterated sweet chocolate, canned food contaminated with hairpins, cigar stubs, and worms, rickety furniture, leaky raincoats, dissolving straw hats, disintegrating motor cars, rotten radio sets, and tottering typewriters with self-knotting ribbons.[11] Decay oozed everywhere, even as the rhetoric of modernism and triumphal industrial progress insisted on human perfectibility through technology and science. If this was modernity, it was a moribund modernity indeed.

5   "Laying the Ghost of a Victorian House," *House and Garden* 54 (July 1928): 68. Indiana University Libraries. Photo, Sarah Burns

another along interminable streets that taper off into swamps or dump heaps— these appear again and again as they should in any honest delineation of the American scene."[12]

The pejorative "mongrel" was ubiquitous at that time. As applied to architecture, it denoted the indescribable, the indeterminate mixture, the impure and the unclean, the stylistic neither/ nor, applied indiscriminately to anything deemed eclectic, excessively exotic, or outré. By no coincidence, in the 1920s and 1930s the colonial style enjoyed an all-out revival in domestic architecture, representing something pure, and purely American, rooted in the traditions of early (and infinitely more virtuous) American home life, safely distant from the pathologies of the Gilded Age. Praising the "true Colonial type of dwelling" in just those terms, the *Washington Post* in 1934 rated Victorian architecture the "most grotesque" and noted that, while there had since been improvement, "there are still far too many mongrel types desecrating the landscape."[13]

Short of demolition, only extreme measures could exorcise the ghosts, purge the present of the diseased past, and sweep its filthy droppings from the land. Some, in brutally surgical terms, proposed amputation of all gimcrackery: "Get yourself an axe and saw, and cut your way to simplicity."[14] Others urged a total makeover, as in the illustration to the suggestively titled article, "Laying the Ghost of a Victorian House" (fig. 5). At top is the house in its Victorian regalia: Tudor arches, polychromatic patterning, ornate trusses, spiky ridgepole. Below is the result of the overhaul, which has stripped away all "excrescences," enlarged the windows, tamed the gables, and cleaned up the roofline to produce the approximation of an Anglo-American colonial manor with classical pretensions. Inside, presumably, there are no spiderwebs or gloomy crannies. The ghosts have decamped; the mongrel has become a thoroughbred.

Such expressions suggest why the Victorian house came to stand as a symbol of past corruption still haunting the present. Like the period that spawned it, the house was unclean. In the words of one Wesley Sherwood Bessell, Victorian houses were "droppings" strewn across the countryside—droppings in turn loaded with their own vile "excrescences." Less bluntly, Hopper himself implied as much in his commentary on Burchfield's architectural imagery—using words that might equally apply to his own: "Our native architecture with its hideous beauty, its fantastic roofs, pseudo-Gothic, French Mansard, Colonial, mongrel or what not, with eye-searing color or delicate harmonies of faded paint, shouldering one

Morbid Memories

Like a body, the Victorian house enclosed a spirit within its shell. Exterior and interior were coextensive; the facade with its turrets, mansard or steeply gabled roof, irregular angles, and jigsaw scrollwork promised inner spaces equally eccentric and complex, equally disconcerting. Indeed, in contemporary opinion, Victorian houses were made to be haunted. As the author of "Laying the Ghost" asked, rhetorically:

Why should ghosts take up their haunts in one type of dwelling, and kind spirits in another? Need I answer this question, when in every town there are houses known to serve as hiding places for evil spirits, houses with high ceilings, deep gloomy closets under the roof, web-like structures of wood where spiders spin their traps, strange, dark-wood posts, with outlines that easily dissolve into corpses, abandoned tower rooms where chipmunks roll the acorns about during the night hours, moon-pointing finials topping gables about which bats play tag, those houses which were built after the Civil War. In them were the dark walnut doors, the heavy trim and panels. In them we remember the odor of horse-hair upholstery on the clumsy furniture standing in the parlor, where dark shades were always drawn against the invasion of cheery sunlight.[15]

The Victorian house was haunted because—with its dark crannies and cob-webbed attic—it harbored the shadows of past lives, memories that refused to die. In Sinclair Lewis's 1920 best seller, *Main Street*, the protagonist, Carol Kennicott, surveys the bedroom of her new husband's "mid-Victorian" house in Gopher Prairie, Minnesota, and succumbs to panic and despair:

its full dismalness crawled over her: the awkward knuckly L-shape of it; the black walnut bed with apples and spotty pears carved on the headboard; the imitation maple bureau, with pink-daubed scent bottles and a petticoated pin-cushion on a marble slab uncomfortably like a gravestone. . . . The old linen smelled of the tomb. She was alone in this house, this strange still house, among the shadows of dead thoughts and haunting repressions. "I hate it! I hate it!" she panted.

Once homey and comfortable, the Kennicott house has become uncanny in the Freudian sense: it now harbors something strange and ominous, something, once alive, that intrudes itself as a disturbing presence.[16]

Nowhere did such dreadful strangeness manifest itself more acutely than in the parlor, that "old-fashioned chamber of horrors," as one contemporary described it. It was the perfect embodiment of the "wax flower" era, with its "exquisite and exclusive taste for the dead." So unsettling were its connotations even at the dawn of the twentieth century that the influential editor Edward Bok launched a campaign against it in the *Ladies' Home Journal*. The decor and the very atmosphere were deathly, he wrote: "we hang a wreath of wax flowers in a glass case on the walls, adding, perhaps, a coffin-plate to add a cheerful tone to the room; a carpet riotous with the most gorgeous roses is put on the floor, and then, after having carefully pulled down every shade in the room, so as to . . . get a nice, musty and cemeterial smell in the room, we have what we call, in America, a parlor." The idea of the parlor's "cemeterial" ambience was no metaphor. Before professionalized undertaking had taken over the funeral business, the parlor was the room where the dead were laid out for viewing. In one late nineteenth-century photograph (fig. 6), for example, we see a parlor in which an open coffin, smothered in flowers, stands on a "riotous[ly]" flowered carpet amid a profusion of fringed velvet upholstery, fancy cushions, busily

patterned wallpaper, and pictures in heavy frames. Its "cemeterial" atmosphere is almost palpable.[17]

Inside and out, memories saturated the Victorian house, memories of the men and women who had been born in the Brown Decades and wished only to forget them. At the same time, there was an emotional bond not easily broken, even with the recollection, for example, of the Brussels carpet, a "Victorian unsanitary horror," or the "hideous" marble tabletops and gilt and blue porcelain clocks under bell jars. What drew the mind back to such homely horrors? The reason was plain to see: these were "the houses we knew in childhood" that had been lived in as no modern house was. "That was their charm; they had taken on the inexplicable patina of human contacts." Because of that—the trace and sediment of past lives—such places exerted a powerful attraction and a repulsion equally strong. They could be homey or horrible or, more likely, homey *and* horrible, as in Morgan's model of "a house that retains the personality of its former owners" and thus "remains in their spiritual possession;

it is *possessed*. . . . Gothic [i.e., horror] houses, with their abundant secluded spaces, nurture psychopathic carryover, projecting a 'lived in' character in the most distressing sense."[18]

The most vocal and relentless critics of the Gilded Age or Brown Decades were indeed those who had been born during that time. So self-evident was the generational complex that it prompted Elisabeth Luther Cary to observe that the Victorian house was "the kind of thing that has suffered most at the hands of certain bitter young painters and writers who fasten upon the homes of their childhood, depicting them in the aspect of obstructive demons destroying precious individualities. Even a walnut hatrack . . . has been charged with breaking the spirit of one of these sensitive natures."[19] Sarcasm aside, Cary was right about the status of the Victorian house—inside or out—as bugaboo and symbol of the modern psyche held in the grip of the past and irresistibly drawn back to it. Bitter or not, it was the Gilded Age generation that created the iconic image of the Victorian house as a haunting presence in the modern landscape.

Edward Hopper was born in Nyack, New York, in 1882—the height of the Gilded Age. His mother, Elizabeth, was a forceful personality who held the purse strings, dominated her chronically unsuccessful husband, and controlled her children's lives.[20] Hopper's childhood home, built by his maternal grandfather, was an 1858 Greek revival with an understated Queen Anne addition, but flamboyant Queen Anne and French Second Empire mansions abounded in Nyack and were integral to the built landscape of Hopper's boyhood. Later, Hopper closely studied Gilded Age architecture, recording its "hideous beauty" in meticulously rendered watercolors on location in Gloucester, Massachusetts, his summer

6   *Coffin in Parlor,* late nineteenth century. Photograph, 4 ½ x 6 ½ in. Photo courtesy of Anthony Vizzari, Museum of Mourning Photography, Chicago

7   Edward Hopper, *Haskell's House*, 1924. Watercolor over graphite on paperboard, 13½ x 19½ in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Herbert A. Goldstone. Image courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington

haunt in the 1920s. These—like *Haskell's House* of 1924 (fig. 7)—are straightforward notations of place, time, and atmosphere. Morphologically, *Haskell's House* could be the forerunner of *House by the Railroad*. It stands elevated, framed by two telephone poles that accentuate its fusty antiquity. Yet there is nothing spooky or ominous about it; it is part of a mundane streetscape that includes neighboring houses and some windblown laundry on a line. It is homely, *heimlich*. The unhomely *House by the Railroad*, in contrast, exists nowhere but in the artist's mind. "My aim in painting," wrote Hopper, "has always been the most exact transcription possible of my most intimate impressions of nature. . . . I believe that the great painters, with their intellect as master, have attempted to force this unwilling medium of paint and canvas into a record of their emotions. I find any digression from this large aim leads me to boredom."[21] That was what Hopper transcribed in *House by the Railroad*. His moldering

Victorian mansion is an architectural figment, a dream image, a repository of intense feeling. Even the viewing angle bears this out. We merely look up at Haskell's house, as if we are standing on a sidewalk, but as we gaze, with a worm's-eye view, at the house across the tracks, it looms over us as if with intent, like some stern parental figure. Do we shrink back into childhood in its presence?

Hopper, characteristically, played his emotional cards close to his chest with architectural motifs that express an ostensibly deadpan detachment. Yet there is nothing neutral about *House by the Railroad*. This once-fashionable high-style house rises portentously like some malign apparition beyond those rust-red tracks. A prime example of "mongrel" architecture's oxymoronic "hideous beauty," the old mansard-lidded mansion hints at unease and ambivalence about family, childhood, and home. As to its genesis or specific significance to Hopper, we can only speculate. But given the emphatically

8 Charles Burchfield, *Church Bells Ringing, Rainy Winter Night*, 1917. Watercolor and gouache over graphite on paper, 30 x 19 in. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Louise M. Dunn in memory of Henry G. Keller, 1949.544. Reproduced with permission of the Charles E. Burchfield Foundation. Photo © The Cleveland Museum of Art

feminine gendering of Victorian domesticity in conjunction with the supreme power of Hopper's mother over husband and son, it is hard to resist imagining that *this* house hints at a dire, lurking, matriarchal presence. As the literary scholar Priscilla Paton asks, "Can we imagine a happy childhood in Hopper's *House by the Railroad*?"[22]

More transparently, the old house for Charles Burchfield functioned as a metaphor for psychological interiority, feeling, and memory. Especially in his earlier work, the moody artist associated old and decrepit architecture with long-repressed childhood traumas, possibly the early loss of his father and the straitened circumstances of his upbringing, with his widowed and grieving mother, in Salem, Ohio. For Burchfield, houses were alive and sentient. In his 1916 journal, he wrote that houses were "often more moody than nature. . . . In the daytime they have an astonished look; at dusk they are evil, seem to brood over some crime." He returned to childhood memories as one might return to the scene of a crime—describing, for example, the night before Christmas, when "the wind moans around the house corners, now rising to a hideous shriek now sinking to a half mournful half evil moan. . . . And dark shadows come down from the ceiling."[23]

That dumbstruck dread is the subject of *Church Bells Ringing, Rainy Winter Night* (fig. 8). As Burchfield noted, "It was an attempt to express a childhood emotion—a rainy winter night—the churchbell is ringing and it terrifies me (the child)—the bell ringing motive reaches out and saturates the rainy sky—the roofs of the houses dripping with rain are influenced; the child attempts to be comforted by the thought of candle lights and Christmas trees, but the fear of the black, rainy night is overpowering." The image itself fully realizes the painter's thoughts. Even without the artist's voice, the viewer can sense the threat emanating from the spectral bell tower, the black raindrops, the sway-backed houses with their grimacing doors and frowning windows. The home—and family— offer no protection; the child is alone with his fear.[24]

In the 1920s Burchfield—inspired by the bleak realism of Sherwood

Anderson's novel *Winesburg, Ohio*— refocused his art on the outside world, the "great epic poetry of Midwest American life. . . . I became interested in the reliques [*sic*] of what might be termed our tag-end pioneer days— the false-front stores . . . old frame houses and other buildings of former days. . . . If I presented them in all their garish and crude primitiveness and unlovely decay, it was merely through a desire to be honest about them."[25] Yet Burchfield saturated those "honest" visions of decay with such feeling that even the taciturn Hopper responded to the brooding *House by a Railroad* (fig. 9) as "pure emotion," embedded in "a solid and convincing reality." With its overhang and gaunt, vertical proportions, the house is a stripped-down and now derelict midwestern translation of the stick style fashionable back east in the 1870s and 1880s. The emotion that Hopper sensed in Burchfield's image resides in

the unsettled atmosphere, the "little sapling" slapping its leaves "violently" against the old house, the "mystery of the storm and wind."[26] Past and present stand in jarring juxtaposition, where the leaning telegraph pole and the glaring railroad sign in the foreground accentuate the forlorn desolation of the "relique" that asserts its haunting presence in the weedy landscape. The domicile depicted in *House of Mystery*, too, is just such a relic. Burchfield found it on Niagara Street in Buffalo, New York, where, in the 1920s, he designed wallpaper for the H. M. Birge Company. A real place, it is at the same time a house shot through with morbid and macabre feeling.

The Victorian mansions of the print-maker Mabel Dwight (1875–1955) are even more nakedly personal. *Deserted Mansion* (fig. 10) represents an abandoned house on Staten Island. It is a turreted, Italo-Moorish pile with ivy-shrouded walls and a shadowy

10 Mabel Dwight, *Deserted Mansion*, 1928. Lithograph, 11 ½ x 9 ⅝ in. Indianapolis Museum of Art, Gift of Miss Blanche Stillson. Photo, Indianapolis Museum of Art

domesticity but alienation, secrets, betrayals, madwomen in the attic, and—in her own case—no happy endings.

Trained as a painter, Dwight had lived her early life as a liberated bohemian, in New Orleans, San Francisco, New York, and Paris. She turned to lithography in 1927 and managed to survive in New York until ill health and growing deafness gradually undermined her ability to produce. Solitary and sad, she had been so tragically unlucky in love that she strove desperately at times to escape her painful present by retreating into the past. Even there, though, dark secrets lay in wait.

The past hypnotizes me. . . . I seldom liked my today's, so I turned my back and began looking into the past. . . . My past is not dead; it is striving to be born. I am pregnant with my past. . . . My conscious mind has turned much of [its] weight over to my unconscious memory. I sometimes meet these fragments of my past in my dreams. . . . They too are striving to be born; they are unhappy at being separated from my conscious memory. . . . Memory has too much authority. . . . But she cannot be discharged. I want to know what she is hiding from me.[28]

veranda, next to which a shuttered window doubles as a staring, masklike face. Like the road outside the toppling fence and decaying walls, life has passed this mansion by. Dwight wrote that, when she first came upon the place, she "thought of Jane Eyre" and imagined ghosts peering from the towers. "The upper windows were not boarded or shuttered, and they looked at one with that insane expression which windows of long empty houses acquire."[27] Dwight's association of the deserted mansion with Charlotte Brontë's gothic novel suggests that for this modern woman, the house—and the memories it harbored—connoted not family and cozy Victorian

The birth of hidden memories brought to light the most troubling "fragments" from the mind's shadowy corners and musty closets. Pregnant with the past, Dwight's spectral mansion is a psychic self-portrait, signifier of a haunted mind. Like the madwoman in the attic, the artist was a prisoner in her own Victorian house of memory. It had swallowed her whole.

Dwight's sad ruminations lend weight to the notion that in the modern age the Victorian house became home to psychological demons. Each house was a vessel, a lid clamped down on a stew of powerful emotions, both personal and cultural—fear, dread, trauma, anxiety,

disgust, repulsion, grief, guilt—meant to be shoved to the back of a dark closet and forgotten. What the house contained, though, always threatened to seep out, no matter how strong the desire to subdue and repress it. Like Pandora's box, it exerted a perverse allure, roused the irresistible impulse to raise the lid, peer inside, discover the secret, penetrate the mystery. What haunted these houses were memories that refused to die.

The Old Dark House

Outside the walls of gallery or studio, the Victorian house did the same kind of cultural work, making its way into the modern American imagination through movies and other forms of mass culture. Through these popular forms, we can also discern more clearly a general shift in attitude from fear and loathing in the 1920s to increasingly nostalgic sentiment and, finally, mockery, as

the dilapidated mansion became the target of perverse and playful humor. James Whale's 1932 film, *The Old Dark House*, gave its name to the cinematic genre in which the old house, creepy and sinister, is home to monsters and phantoms.[29] Providing concealment for elusive murderers, lurking madmen, and assorted eccentrics, such structures played a starring role while suffusing the mise-en-scène with a moody atmosphere of apprehension and fear. The expatriate director Paul Leni gave definitive visual form to the old dark house in his 1927 silent film, *The Cat and the Canary*. Leni brought the conventions of German expressionism to the sinister Victorian castle on the Hudson River where the story unfolds (fig. 11). In the opening shot, we see the fantastic pile looming, conical turrets darkly silhouetted against a lurid sky. Surrounded by overgrown trees and shrubs, the sinister Gothic structure is the cinematic equivalent of Hopper's *House by the Railroad* and its kin.

11 Mansion on the Hudson from Paul Leni's *The Cat and the Canary*, 1927. Digital frame, Photofest, New York

Such haunted cinematic sites tapped into deep American roots extending back to Edgar Allan Poe (Leni was a fan), who set an enduring mark on the type in "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839). In Poe's tale of terror, Roderick Usher, last of a degenerate line, dies raving mad in the embrace of his zombie sister, whom he has tried to entomb alive in the bowels of the crumbling house. With its "vacant, eye-like windows" and ominously cracked and moldering walls above a "black and lurid" tarn, the house itself reflects Usher's disintegrating body and disordered mind. Poe's imagined mansion became a lasting symbol of family degeneration and decay, along with Nathaniel Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables* (1851), an ancient colonial manse haunted by a family curse that made the house the embodiment of an "odious and abominable past."[30] Such visions had a particular resonance in America, where the sanctity and security of home and family lay at the very foundation of the democratic ideal.

Ill-fated homes of this sort served as templates for the old dark house as the scene of the crime in modern mystery and detective fiction. Scores of books bore such titles as *House of Mystery, House of Horror, House of Death, House of Doom*, and many more along the same lines. In some, the style of the house was less important than the atmosphere enshrouding it.[31] The pulp horror fabulist H. P. Lovecraft drew (like Hawthorne) on early New England colonial models rather than the Victorian, but his houses concealed disgusting secrets. "The Shunned House," for example, is an abandoned wreck with broken windows, "rotting Ionic pilasters," a wormy pediment, and a "sickish smell"; in the dank basement are rotting fungi that emit a phosphorescent glow. Not precisely haunted, the house is unlucky: "What was really beyond

dispute is that a frightful proportion of persons [had] died there."[32]

But the Victorian style figured in many more tales, including Andrew Laing's 1934 mystery novel, *The Cadaver of Gideon Wyck by a Medical Student*. The story unfolds in a small town in Maine, which is thrown into confusion by an outbreak of monstrous births and gory rituals involving witchcraft, autopsy rooms, and blood transfusions. Setting the scene is the Victorian house of the murdered Dr. Wyck. The narrator confesses:

I never could enter it without thinking of Hansel and Gretel, and the witch's house of gingerbread . . . the old place, with intricate scrollwork festooning the verandah and the eaves, was painted a chocolate brown that had faded to the precise color of gingerbread. It must have been built in the late seventies. . . . Obviously, nothing could have been done about the house without razing it and building it anew. . . . At least it was all of a piece: they had left it just as they found it: a monument to the most tasteless period of American Victorianism.[33]

So pervasive was the notion of the Victorian house as a site of evil that fact and fantasy came to be virtually interchangeable, as in Chicago, where, in 1933, such a house became the scene of a real murder mystery. The victim was Rheta Wynekoop, a pretty redhead found chloroformed and shot in the back on an operating table in the basement clinic of her physician mother-in-law, on the night of November 21, 1933. After two contentious trials, the jury found Dr. Alice Wynekoop guilty of the crime and sentenced her to twenty-five years in prison. Widely reported in the most lurid terms, the case was a media sensation, the Wynekoop house itself attracting as much attention as the accused killer. The so-called

Murder Mansion (fig. 12) was a wildly eclectic, vaguely Jacobean, late Victorian with a cavernous porch and a castellated second-story bay window surmounted by a tall and narrow stepped gable. The place was invariably described in the news and detective magazines as the sort of house where a murder *would* be committed. In the words of one true-crime reporter, this was a setting "to delight a writer of mystery thrillers—an austere and somber brick dwelling of the kind fashionable thirty years ago . . . weather-beaten and uninviting from the outside; inside . . . sixteen big, high-ceilinged rooms furnished with ponderous pieces of antiquated style, heavy drapes and curtains, and the accumulation of years—dark, dreary, and gloomy." Others embroidered on the theme: "All the eerie elements of a murder mystery thriller were in the case—humors of a mad man or moron, a basement door and whether it was locked or unlocked, a dark old house, a beautiful victim." Where else could such an atrocious crime take place? The notion of the old house as the site of chilling mystery even colored the lenses through which one critic saw Burchfield. Sensing a general change of mood in the painter's work, this writer commented: "Burchfield has not lost his sense of drama, one might say that from burlesque he has turned to mystery thrillers."[34]

A "gloomy memorial" tainted beyond redemption, the Wynekoop house ultimately fell victim to the wrecker's ball.[35] Murder mansions or otherwise, many more old dark houses slid into decline or were demolished during the interwar period. Neighborhoods changed drastically as the affluent sought more fashionable addresses, leaving their erstwhile homes to become cheap rooming houses for the working and indigent poor. Often, the old piles were razed to make way for commercial

MURDER MANSION
where the victim in the sensational Wynekoop mystery was found in the basement operating room of her mother-in-law, Doctor Alice Wynekoop, well-known Chicago physician

and industrial expansion. Those left standing became eloquent symbols of a bygone era and urban blight.

In the suburbs and the countryside, too, Victorian mansions decayed into ruin. The photographer Walker Evans toured New England and parts of New York State in 1930–31 to document American houses of the federal and the Victorian periods. Several were in Hopper's own hometown of Nyack, notably the turreted and lavishly embellished mansion standing amid overgrown shrubs and steadily encroaching weeds (fig. 13). Kin to Hopper's *House by the Railroad*, this house, too, is abandoned: almost hidden by scraggly foliage is a For Rent sign tacked to the porch balustrade to the left of the stairs. In 1933 the Museum of Modern Art in New York exhibited

13 Walker Evans, *Folk Victorian House with Jigsaw Ornament Gables and Porch, Nyack, New York*, 1930–31. Glass negative, 6 ½ x 8 ½ in. Walker Evans Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994 (1994.256.197). © Walker Evans Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo, Art Resource, New York

thirty-nine photographs from Evans's Victorian Series at the same time that it mounted a Hopper retrospective, which included *House by the Railroad* from the museum's own collection. Struck by the parallels, Lincoln Kirstein noted that many of Evans's houses "seem to exist in an airless atmosphere, much as they exist in the airless nostalgia for the past to which Edward Hopper . . . pays a more personal tribute."[36]

Evans's Victorian Series traveled to several other museums until 1940. By that time, many of the houses in the photographs had long vanished from the landscape. The steady disappearance of such places, along with the somber mood of the Depression years, helped usher in milder memories of the ginger-bread past. Whereas in the 1920s, the Victorian era still mirrored the present darkly, the 1930s brought distance and even (as Kirstein's comment on Hopper suggests) nostalgia. In 1933 the magazine *Antiques* devoted an

entire issue to Victorian art and design, which it had consistently shunned, but cautioned readers that the products of the Victorian age were on the whole "singularly unlovely." Regardless, urban sophisticates cultivating an "indulgent, half humorous" attitude had already begun to adorn their apartments with Currier and Ives prints, haircloth sofas, and old square pianos. Later in the decade, the phenomenal success of Margaret Mitchell's novel *Gone with the Wind* cemented the newly nostalgic and mistily romantic view of Americana, Victorian style. *Life Magazine*, for example, pictured Aunt Pittypat's parlor with a caption describing it as "mid-Victorian, upholstered, feminine," adorned with knickknacks that gave it a "sentimental air."[37]

Chronological and emotional distance also ushered in a culture of humor and satire that skewered the absurdities of Victorian excess. Just as the old dark house movies eventually

14   Perkins Harnly, "The Gay Nineties," *Americana*, June 1933, 21. Photo, Sarah Burns

became parodies of themselves, the Victorian house and its décor were parodied in other media. The philosopher Noel Carroll asserts that the difference between horror and humor boils down to the presence or absence of fear. He writes, "fear is the métier of horror fiction. In order to transform horror into laughter, the fearsome-ness of the monster—its threat to human life—must be . . . hidden from our attention. Then we will laugh where we would otherwise scream."[38] Thus, as the horrors of Victorian architecture receded in time, so did odium fade into jokey condescension. The houses might still be monstrous, awful, and evil—but laughter, however ambivalent, dispelled and deflected their power.

Perkins Harnly's "The Gay Nineties" exemplifies that new trend (fig. 14). This lively drawing represents a late Victorian house—sporting balustrades, bays, gables, a cupola, and exuberant flourishes—squeezed into a lace-trimmed corset that compresses the building into the shape of a wasp-waisted, full-bosomed female torso. Dangling from the bottom edge are two stocking garters that frame the crushed veranda and its broken columns. This was the first of Harnly's Victorian spoofs in the satirical magazine *Americana*. The editor, Alexander King, was a New York illustrator and man-about-town who, on seeing Harnly's picture of a corset "crushing a great, big mansion," immediately demanded it for publica-tion. As with the Victorian-themed watercolors Harnly was making at about the same time, Harnly's fanciful works in the series were exercises in volup-tuous overload, "more elaborate than elaborate, more ornate than ornate." The artist (1901–1986) aimed much of his mockery at what he dubbed "the

Monstrosity Decade" of 1900–1910, the period that, to his mind, was the coda, the last gasp of what had gone before.[39]

Harnly was obsessed with all things Victorian. Born and raised in Nebraska, he was a peripatetic jack-of-all-trades who claimed to have taught himself to draw from the Sears catalogue. His grandfather built fancy Queen Anne mansions, including a magnificent pile for himself. As the artist recalled, it boasted "red brick with jig-saw fretwork in wood with delicately fashioned half moons, lace work, spools, spindles, fans, knobs, and machine-carved pillars" and had verandas, bay and dormer windows, balconies, turrets, and gables all rising to a dome "surmounted by ornamental lightning rods."[40]

Seemingly the opposite of *House by the Railroad* and its ilk, "The Gay Nineties" uses many of the same ingre-dients but in a different recipe. Like Hopper's house, Harnly's is a mix of

complicated emotions and ambivalent memories—but, unlike Hopper's, in humorous guise. Only one critic at the time suspected something more troubling beneath the quirky packaging. Reviewing Harnly's first one-man show at the Francis Toor Gallery in Mexico City, Enrique Asunsolo recoiled from what he perceived as horrifying "fantasies of infancy" at the root of the "truculent comedy" of Harnly's Victorian "diversions."[41]

What those presumed traumas of infancy might be, we can only guess from the artist's vision of the house as a colossal dominatrix of sorts, its entrance (so suggestively situated between those garters) a portal to oblivion, or bliss. Harnly was not the only artist to entertain such notions. More deadpan but equally to the point was James Thurber's *New Yorker* cartoon in which a tiny, startled man perceives his house as the personification of all-engulfing femininity (fig. 15). In front, a square Victorian with a veranda and a mansard roof, in back, the house morphs into a gigantic, ferociously scowling woman (wife or mother, it hardly matters) who awaits the little man's arrival.

Harnly's pictured corset itself bulges with further subversive suggestiveness. As the artist confided in a 1981 interview, the highlight of the mail-order catalogue, his boyhood "bible," was the lingerie section: "We loved, especially, the women's underwear, and the corsets and the brassieres and the girdles. And that part of the magazine was always the dirtiest, from being folded up so much."[42] Not only the much-thumbed pages were dirty. By implication, underwear itself—meant to cover and hide intimate, erotic, and shameful body parts—was, in fact, the "dirtiest."

Playing on the then-prevalent stereotype of Victorians as suffocatingly proper hypocrites who feared, repressed, and denied their sexuality, Harnly's corseted mansion punned on that act of repression while slyly intimating precisely what the Victorians so sedulously desired to conceal. At the same time, Harnly encoded the secret of his own homosexuality in this flamboyant fantasy. A transvestite living on the social and economic fringe, he described himself as an old whore, the "Twentieth Centurie's [*sic*] most notorious, low-down old queen," and (among many other things) "a plush-hipped he-nancy."[43] The house, itself, also exuberantly plush-hipped, hints at Harnly's self-identification with it. Queering the Victorian house, the artist concealed in it his own fears and desires. In this context, the "gay" Nineties might resonate with special, private meanings.

In a somewhat different way, the *New Yorker* cartoonist Charles Addams's project also involved a process of queering the American family home through a calculated perversion of the norm. Addams (1912–1988) began his

15 James Thurber, "House Woman," *New Yorker*, March 23, 1935. © 1935 Rosemary A. Thurber. Reprinted by arrangement with Rosemary A. Thurber and The Barbara Hogenson Agency. All rights reserved

career retouching crime-scene photographs at *True Detective* magazine in New York. There, he re-created "how the murderer moved about the room" and painted the blood out of excessively gory police photographs, though he claimed to prefer them unaltered. Horror flipped into humor when Addams began to draw cartoons for the *New Yorker*. He published his first cartoon of the ghoulish Addams family in 1938 but revealed the exterior of their dilapidated Victorian mansion only in the issue of November 10, 1945 (fig. 16), when the quintessential old dark house materialized complete with mansard roof, tower, fish-scale shingles, scrollwork, and iron lace beyond a chained-off drive and a leafless, wind-blown tree bearing a signboard warning, "Beware of the Thing." Piling on every signifier of Victorian stylistic excess and monstrosity, Addams transformed an architectural nightmare into a pathological fun house.[44]

The old dark Victorian house had become a capacious symbolic vessel serving a range of cultural functions and desires. It was terrifying and monstrous, tasteless and romantically antiquated, or morbidly funny; indeed, it could be some or all of those things at once. In his cover for the March 1947 issue of *Weird Tales*, the illustrator Boris Dolgov drew on the same vocabulary as did Addams, designing his own version with iron lace, mansard-roofed tower, Gothic gingerbread, and Usher-esque eyelike windows (fig. 17). Dolgov's house radiates a more disquieting aura in that it is amplified by a red sky, rising moon, and weird nocturnal creatures. On the cover of a pulp magazine dedicated to supernatural horror and gross excess (Lovecraft published all of his work here), the house occupies a different emotional register than Addams's. But it is haunted, unambiguously so; we need no further information. The caption, "A haunted house . . . A haunted life"

is superfluous. The Victorian house was simply "better for haunts," as Addams put it, its signifiers so familiar that they needed no explanation. Depending on context, those "haunts" might be laughable or terrifying, but the Victorian house was their only true home.[45]

The horror scholar Jack Morgan writes that "when literary conventions such as the bleak, antiquated mansion become deeply familiar, they are often dropped . . . or become narrative blanks; a readership, that is, brings these conventions to a reading, and they need not be overtly presented."[46] Over time, the Victorian mansion came to be just such a narrative blank. The Addams mansion, Dolgov's weird house, and the eerie Bates house in *Psycho* were (and are) narrative blanks in the same fashion; then as now, viewers needed no clues to decipher the code. Such houses were already haunted, and the viewers knew it, just by the look of the place.

This helps illuminate the putative ancestry of the Bates mansion. Many assume that its model was either Hopper's *House by the Railroad* or the Addams family mansion (or both). While Hitchcock himself offered varying accounts, what he told fellow director François Truffaut seems plausible. The actual source, Hitchcock claimed, was a type of Victorian house common in Northern California and known as either "California Gothic" or, "when they're particularly awful, 'California gingerbread.'" The house on the set of *Psycho*, he said, was an "authentic reproduction" of the real thing. "I chose that house and motel because I realized that if I had taken an ordinary low bungalow the effect wouldn't have been the same. I felt that type of architecture would help the atmosphere of the yarn."[47]

Yet the association of *House by the Railroad* with the Bates mansion persists, and both—along with the Addams
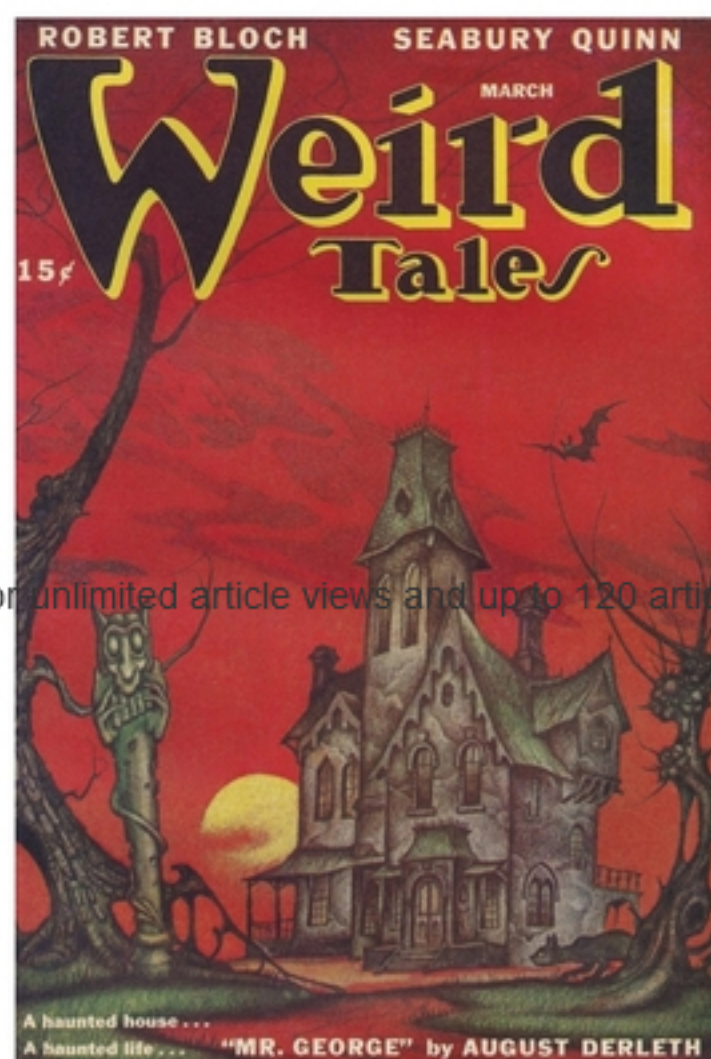
16 Charles Addams, "Beware of the
    Thing," *New Yorker*, November
    10, 1945. ©Charles Addams,
    with permission from the Tee
    and Charles Addams Foundation

17 Boris Dolgov, cover illustra-
    tion, *Weird Tales*, March 1947.
    Collection, Robert Weinberg.
    © 1947, *Weird Tales*

house—have bred countless progeny in the popular realm. There are hundreds of "gothic" romances whose illustrated covers show turreted mansions looming behind the heroines who flee them in terror. On the Internet, we find haunted house cakes, haunted house screen savers and Lego assemblages, haunted doll-houses, haunted house model kits, and a Scooby-Doo! Haunted House board game, not to mention the Phantom Manor attraction, a *Psycho* house abroad, at Disney World, Paris. The members of the Addams family—and their iconic house—have expanded their horizons in television serials, movies, pinball and video games, and, most recently, a musical comedy that (like the repressed) seems always to return.

Ironically, the narrative blankness of *House by the Railroad*, Burchfield's *House of Mystery*, Dwight's *Deserted Mansion*, and their kin overlays what was once a historically and culturally specific response to a disturbing past that had both biographical and social dimensions. The artists' visions grew out of and in turn fed the ambivalent and anxious discourse of the Victorian house, writing the codes for what we have largely forgotten yet still intuitively sense. Their iconic status and ubiquitous offspring in the popular realm testify to our persistent fascination with the perversities of the American home and the dark side of everything within. And whether we dream, snicker, or shiver in the presence of such places, their capacity to stir our emotions has hardly faded. Even today, they continue to haunt the imagination with undiminished power.

1   In this essay, I use "Victorian" as a generic label for the full range of nonclassical American architectural styles from the antebellum era through the close of the nineteenth century.

2   Jack Morgan, *The Biology of Horror: Gothic Literature and Film* (Carbondale: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2002), 194. John I. H. Baur, *The Inlander: The Life and Works of Charles Burchfield, 1893–1967* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1982), 133, quotes Burchfield on his expressive goal and writes of the circumstances dictating the change of title. The dealer was the Montross Gallery in New York, which handled Burchfield's work from 1924 to 1928.

3   J. W. Lane, "Exhibition of Water-Colors, Rehn Gallery," *Apollo* 25 (January 1937): 43; Helen Appleton Read, "Charles Burchfield, a Pioneer of the New American School," *London Studio* 10 (October 1938): 209; and Elisabeth L. Cary, "American Pictures in Pittsburgh Show," *New York Times*, October 23, 1927. Cary also sensed just a touch of humor in Burchfield's image.

4   Lloyd Goodrich, "New York Exhibitions," *Arts* 9 (February 1926): 98; Guy Pène du Bois, "The American Paintings of Edward Hopper," *Creative Art*, March 8, 1931, 190.

5   Joy Wheeler Dow, *American Renaissance: A Review of Domestic Architecture* (New York: William T. Comstock, 1904), 75, 108, 111; Alfred W. McCann, "Why I Am Interested in the Craftsman Kitchen," *Craftsman* 27, no. 5 (February 1915): 531–32; and Talbot Faulkner Hamlin, *The American Spirit in Architecture*, vol. 13 of *The Pageant of America* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1926), 150–64. Hamlin called his chapter "Civil War Stagnation—the Victorian Era."

6   Lewis Mumford, *American Taste* (San Francisco: Westgate Press, 1929), 8–14.

7   Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades: A Study of the Arts in America, 1865–1895* (1931; New York: Dover, 1971), 1–10, 75.

8   Ibid., 2–3, 6.

9   Frederic L. Paxson, *Recent History of the United States, 1865–1927* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 602, 603, 632.

10 John Peale Bishop and Edmund Wilson Jr., *The Undertaker's Garland* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), 21, 80–82.

11 Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 232–34.

12 Wesley Sherwood Bessell, "Redeeming Victorian Gimcrackery: How Even the Very Ugly House May Achieve Some Semblance of Beauty," *Garden and Home Builder* 43 (June 1926): 345–46. Edward Hopper, "Charles Burchfield: American," *Arts* 14 (1928): 7, 9.

13 Edson W. Briggs, "Home's Value Not Measured with Dollars," *Washington Post*, June 3, 1934.

14 Bessell, "Redeeming Victorian Gimcrackery," 346.

15 H. Vandervoort Walsh, "Laying the Ghost of a Victorian House," *House and Garden* 54 (July 1928): 68. Also see Carol Troyen, "Hopper in Gloucester," in Troyen, Judith Barter, et al., *Edward Hopper* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2007), 64–69, for a discussion of Hopper's Victorian houses in relation to the prevailing distaste for the architecture of that time.

16 Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street* (New York: P. F. Collier, 1920), 31. For a more extended analysis of the subject, particularly its Freudian aspects, see Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Uncanny* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994).

17 William L. Price, "A Plea for True Democracy in the Domestic Architecture of America," *Craftsman* 16, no. 3 (June 1909): 255; "The Unseemliness of Funerals," *Literary Digest* 54 (April 21, 1917): 1170; and Edward Bok, "Is It Worth While?" *Ladies' Home Journal* 17, no. 12 (November 1900): 18. See James T. Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830–1920* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1980), 176, on the demise of the parlor in part because of its associations with death.

18 "Mid-Victorian Simplicity," *House Beautiful* 39 (April 1916): 153; and Morgan, *The Biology of Horror*, 182.

19 Elisabeth L. Cary, "A Machine Age Speaks," *New York Times*, January 8, 1928.

20 Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995), provides a detailed and illuminating account of the Hopper family dynamics as well as Hopper's adult life and relationships.

21 Edward Hopper, "Notes on Painting," in *Edward Hopper: Retrospective Exhibition* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1933), 17. For a full psychoanalytical discussion of the subject, see Margaret Iverson, "In the Blind Field: Hopper and the Uncanny," *Art History* 21 (September 1998): 409–29.

22 Priscilla Paton, *Abandoned New England: Landscape in the Works of Homer, Frost, Hopper, Wyeth, and Bishop* (Lebanon, N.H.: Univ. Press of New England, 2003), 224. Paton also proposes (156) that in *House by the Railroad*, Hopper was looking back to the Victorian houses of his childhood. See Levin, *Edward Hopper*, 195, on the "compelling tension" in Hopper's life between "the Victorian world of his childhood and the uncertain modern world that intruded on him daily."

23 Charles Burchfield, journal entry, September 15, 1916, and "Memories," vol. 1, notebook, 1917 or 1918; both cited in Baur, *The Inlander*, 41, 83. On the possible impact of his father's death, see Helen R. Beiser, "The Effect of Early Father Loss on the Artist's Work: Charles Burchfield," *Annual of Psychoanalysis* 28 (2000): 203–14.

24 Charles Burchfield, descriptive note in *Charles Burchfield: Early Watercolors, 1916 to 1918* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1930), 11. For a discussion of Burchfield's houses from a perspective somewhat different from mine, see Kenneth L. Ames, "Of Times, Places, and Old Houses," in Nanette V. Maciejunes and Michael D. Hall, *The Paintings of Charles Burchfield: North by Midwest* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with the Columbus Museum of Art, 1997), 50–61.

25 Charles Burchfield, "On the Middle Border," *Creative Art* 3 (September 1928): 30.

26 Edward Hopper, "Charles Burchfield: American," *Arts* 14 (1928): 9.